

Awakening Warrior
Revolution in the Ethics of Warfare
Timothy L. Challans (2007)

Book's Argument: Challans argues for a revolution in military ethics focusing on moral autonomy instead of moral authority, reason over ideology, and moral justification instead of moral foundation.

Key Takeaways: Challans present an unflinching critique of the current system of military ethics and ethical instruction. He challenges the usefulness and effectiveness of a military ethos and characterizes such an ethos as dogma which can result systematic and institutional moral error. A better military ethic would be one that empowered military professionals to “employ public reason in moral matters.”

Best Quotes: “People are morally autonomous if they live as morally reflective people, if they live by beliefs based on rationale they understand, beliefs that are open to correction or abandonment in the presence of good reason.”

“I find cadets in their undergraduate years to be good learners. And majors in their mid-thirties are very good learners as well. But colonels are typically not good when it comes to learning. Their curiosity is replaced with the certainties they have acquired through their experience. In general, reflection challenges us to change, and it is harder to change the older and more entrenched we become.”

Why it's important: The development of military professional ethics will mean little if not taught and trained to military professionals in a way that truly arms them to make ethical decisions when faced with tough moral choices in ambiguous circumstances. Dr Challans provides important arguments that military professionals should consider as we shape our ethics doctrine, education, and instruction.

